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Entertainment scene

Check out the entertainment page. 48

Time for sports

Take a look at the Sports page. 50



Strays won't go to the dogs

RBARI volunteer helps out dogs with campaign

BY MELISSA MEISEL
Staff Writer

Patricia Klemick won't let strays become forgotten creatures. The township resident and volunteer at the Ramapo Bergen Animal Refuge, Inc. (RBARI) of Oakland took on a daunting rescue campaign this summer, single-handedly convincing others via the Internet to save stray dogs on an Arizona reservation.

In less than two months, a ground swell of interest and action led to the dogs being flown into Teterboro from Window Rock, Ariz. on Aug. 15 for placement in three New Jersey animal shelters.

"One person can make a huge difference... no one should just sit back and say 'I can't do anything about an injustice, I'm just one person.' One person's actions can be a ripple in a chain of life events to make a positive change," said Klemick.

In mid-June, Klemick vacationed to Chinle, Ariz. for four days. While staying at the Holiday Inn, she noticed random dogs wandering around the surrounding terrain.

Chinle is on a Navajo Reservation, sitting at the edge of Canyon de Chelly, with incredible formations that visitors come to see from far and wide. It is an area roughly the size of West Virginia.

No matter where she went in Chinle, Klemick saw starving and abused dogs. There were puppies begging for food at the hotels, standing at the take-out windows at fast food restaurants, and at grocery stores. They were on canyon overlooks, begging tourists at every chance for food and water.

"I was stunned and horrified. I didn't know what to do. I asked people about the dogs, but I got nothing back other than a shrug of the shoulders and an indifferent look," said Klemick, who spent more than \$70

on food, water, and bowls for the roaming canines.

Being a volunteer at RBARI, the nomadic dogs of Chinle stuck in Klemick's head after her stay at the hotel.

She spoke with the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, Utah, her next stop on the vacation. Once in Kanab, Klemick met with the Best Friends who said they would help her transport the dogs if she could find places for them out East.

"With that, I left determined to help and started a campaign. I sent e-mails to anyone and everyone who might be able to help. And then these e-mails took on a life of their own," said Klemick.

As a result, Klemick secured three statewide shelters committed to helping with this plight. RBARI, Mt. Pleasant Animal Shelter in East Hanover, and the Monmouth County SPCA in Eatontown agreed to accept some of the strays.

Black Hat Humane Society, a group based in St. Johns, Ariz., assessed the Chinle dogs. A plan was formed to try and place some of the Black Hat dogs already socialized in the hopes of capturing and rehabilitating some of the friendly strays in Chinle.

The call went out for help, and groups began to network to figure out how to help the animals. Several Black Hat fosters visited and fed the Chinle dogs, and actually captured a few in the first visit.

Klemick noted that five dogs have since been rescued from the Chinle area.

"All this in less than two months... it is pretty amazing. No one should ever think that one person can't make a difference," said Klemick.

—
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PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK HAT HUMANE SOCIETY

Kisses (above) is a beagle/Australian cattle dog/blue heeler mix, one of the stray dogs flown in from an Arizona reservation thanks to the efforts of Patricia Klemick this summer.

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Patricia Klemick

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BUSINESS54 CROSSWORD47 OPINION13
CHEF43 DINING46 SOCIALS41
CLASSIFIED59 ENTERTAINMENT.....48 SPORTS50

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